
Orthodox Medicine Humanistic Medicine Holistic Health Care

BEGINNING IN THE December 1979 issue the editors of THE WESTERN JOURNAL OF MEDICINE began a forum for dialogue and discussion of orthodox medicine, humanistic medicine and holistic health care. The forum was initiated with statements by persons known to have an interest in and knowledge of this subject. Readers are invited to submit their views constructively and succinctly. As many as space permits will be published in future issues of the journal. At an appropriate time all of the material, published and unpublished, will be collated and, if possible, a distillate will be prepared to summarize the dialogue and discussion.

—MSMW

Care of the Patient

LOUIS K. DIAMOND, MD

WITH REGARD to the articles and the editorial on "Orthodox Medicine, Humanistic Medicine and Holistic Health Care" in the December issue, I would like to call attention to talks given at Harvard Medical School when I was a student many years ago.¹⁻³ They were by the famous Francis W. Peabody, physician-in-chief at the Boston City Hospital, on the subject of "The Care of the Patient." He emphasized the importance of what is now called by the fancy names "humanistic medicine and holistic health care." Dr. Peabody stated that "scientific medicine" could not replace the care of the patient, and that there had to be a blending of all approaches to make the patient comfortable and contented with his life as well as to help overcome his disease. Everything Dr. Peabody told us then applies equally well to our present problems.

I would strongly reject dividing medicine into

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scientific, humanistic and holistic. Of course it should be scientific up to the limits of our scientific knowledge. The term humanistic medicine may be more appropriately used to distinguish it from veterinary medicine. As for holistic, this is what we used to call "total medical care" which includes physical, mental, emotional, and the many other subdivisions which have unfortunately been permitted to develop under the self-serving stimulus of nature-healers, food-faddists, bone-manipulators, gurus, and other such "specialists."

The old-fashioned family doctor tried to treat the whole person, not just isolated parts of him, and did not give this up as medical science advanced. Of course, he had to call in skilled specialists on occasion, but even then he remained available to support his patient and the family as necessary. The mistake made lately, particularly in teaching young physicians, is to think that science can totally replace, instead of being incorporated in, what is being called holistic health care. It is still just the care of the patient, using the knowledge and wisdom accumulated through the ages. This should be the physician's guiding principle in the practice of medicine. And we should teach as well as constantly remember the value of what we listed as number 1 in the Order Book for every new admission, "give t.l.c., q.s., p.r.n." Only so may we retain or regain the respect and affection of our patients.

REFERENCES

1. Peabody FW: The physician and the laboratory. *Boston Med Surg J* 187:324-328, 1922
2. Peabody FW: The care of the patient. *JAMA* 88:877-882, 1927
3. Peabody FW: The soul of the clinic. *JAMA* 90:1193-1197, 1928

Compassion and Competence

E. R. W. FOX, MD

"EVERY PATIENT carries his own doctor around inside him. The physician in attendance must help the patient use that 'inner doctor' to hasten his recovery. Each individual should be looked upon as a whole person, not as a disease entity." These words were spoken not by a physician but by a

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